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665 NOVEMBER 19-DECEMBER 2, 2020
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A Busload of Moments

I was ten years old when I first felt the satisfaction attached to the act of giving. It was a snow-covered Saturday in the weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas. With a group of school mates and a couple of chaperones, we piled our parkas into a bus and headed toward the Mall of America.

During the ride, the adults doled out cash to each student: \$15 for gifts, \$5 for lunch. The lunch part was mine, but that \$15 was earmarked for “others.” This was a new concept for me but I remember taking it to heart; there was a lot of pre-planning involved on my end. The “others” were people I’d never met, nor would I ever meet them. I had been told by grownups that they were people in need of gifts and “anything that you use every day.” Simple enough.

We were put into groups that I remember quickly fracturing off into smaller groups, and we hit the mall—a bunch of kids armed with \$15. Within minutes of our arrival, budgets were blown. Students ran to stores like Limited Too and

Abercrombie, and spent their entire allocation on a tank top. In their own size. During winter.

Not me. I headed to the third floor, where I knew I could stretch my dollar. My notes said “cheap store,” and I’d pre-budgeted half of my fifteen American dollars for this specific vendor. I was greeted with a half-hello—as if a \$7.50 windfall hadn’t just Bing-Bonged its way past the door chime.

This store was incredible. And tiny. It was as close as you could get to a garage sale inside of the largest mall in the country. Tired, dusty items cluttered the shelves—items that had already lived a long life on a different shelf. The inventory was completely unfocused; you never knew what you might find. And I recall the same attention was put into the direction of said inventory. There were deals to be had but you had to put in the effort to find them. I followed my nose.

I walked out of that heavenly wholesaler with their most boring items: scented candles, socks, and lotion. And \$7.50 to go.

I took my cash down a floor to a clothing store that sold t-shirts for \$2, and I scooped up two of them. The rest of my budget went to the Dollar Tree, where I bought shampoo and a (probably fake) porcelain statuette.

It took me almost two hours to spend \$15 on someone else, an amount I could have spent on myself in less than a minute. I didn’t want to waste someone else’s opportunity. I wanted it to feel like much more than \$15.

I spent my lunch money at Burger King in the north food court. I sat there with my bagged-bounty, and I felt good. I felt something new to me. Someone, somewhere might feel a moment of joy when they’re holding the same bag. I really liked the idea of that.

We were corralled back to the bus and we compared our finds on the ride home. Everyone went in a different direction when it came to gift selection, but it really added up. A literal busload of stuff, some of it utterly useless, but a busload of moments nonetheless. ■



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Books - Not Just Trees Julianne

Our house held many books, and from the time I crawled, I explored all the shelves I could reach, fascinated despite my illiteracy and height limitations.

I learned words, frequently from a poetry collection whose smaller size fit my grip, or books with captions I could connect to illustrations. My folks didn't press me to read; their own evident pleasure in the activity made me want to master those book-bound mysteries. Mother recorded in a Baby Book that at 2 1/2 I had a library of 23 comic books, while I realized I personally could own and reread these treasures.

Dad read to me, with eclectic and sometimes scary choices for a little kid. I learned "crisis" from *Hans Brinker and the Silver Skates*, agonizing through several evenings until the dreadful fever broke and little Hans recovered. Nor were *King Solomon's Mines*, *White Fang*, or Robert W. Service's "The Cremation of Dan McGrew" sleep-inducing fare.

Mother created stories for me about the Pink Spider, a sort of eight-legged Stuart Little thrust upon a family of "normal" gray/brown arachnids who lived in constant fear their offspring's aberrant hue endangered them all. (Through Mother, I mastered subtext at an early age.)

I recently found a 2014 *Atlantic* article describing how in 1943, in mid-WWII, American publishers gambled on creating a new reading public and over the next four years gave away 122,951,031 copies of their best books to servicemen around the world.

Military personnel were isolated and thirsting for something to fill the lonely, dangerous hours. They fell upon the free paperback volumes that could be tucked in pockets or packs and created a wider market for books. What until that time had been aimed for the elite, now introducing literature in addition to westerns and mysteries to the average citizen. In 1931, most titles from major publishing houses cost more than two dollars, a sizeable sum in De-

pression times, and most counties did not even have a bookstore.

In 1939, paperback publishers Pocket Books and Penguin appeared with a mix of new titles and reprints, and by 1943, Pocket Books was printing 38 million copies. At that point in time, the Council on Books in Wartime proposed selling books to the army for six cents a volume. Just as I, safe at home, had discovered the thrill of owning books, so the far-flung military learned the power of the page, while publishers found military and civilians would continue buying books in peacetime—if they were cheap and available.

It suited me. Comics were a dime, and paperbacks, now acceptable, were accessible to everyone, everywhere, displayed on drug-store racks and newsstands, for two bits. Titles ranged from the tony to my new favorites, science fiction masters Ray Bradbury, Theodore Sturgeon, and Robert Sheckley. It was a great time to be alive with quarters sufficient to keep myself in books. ■

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OUR LAVENDER

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BOB MOULD: Interview + New Album

Bob Mould continues his solo career with a fresh sound that's rooted in familiarity. *Blue Hearts* puts a timely message into an album of distinct, deliberately-crafted tracks. Bob Mould was kind enough to grant *Lavender* an interview prior to the release of his new record:

WAS 2012'S *SILVER AGE* YOUR FIRST PROJECT WITH MERGE RECORDS?

That was the first new album I recorded with Merge...my first working with Merge was around the reissues of the Sugar catalog. that was the that was Merge's Initial interest in working with me was getting those catalog pieces for reissue. And after a period of time, they agreed. And that was the beginning of this run of the five records, I guess, you know, starting with *Silver Age*.

DID COVID IMPACT THE RELEASE OF YOUR NEW ALBUM, *BLUE HEARTS*? DID IT PUSH BACK THE RELEASE?

No, no. It was always September 25. It was September 25 from the beginning of the year, back in probably December—we agreed that that would be the day. The album was recorded in the first three weeks of February, and it was mastered and delivered on March 1st. And I guess for the uninitiated, seven months might seem like a long time, but because of, you know, vinyl pressing takes forever, and as we now know, vinyl is very popular again, and there's long lines to get things pressed. So that's that would explain that seven months. And, you know, specifically with the first song, "American Crisis," we knew in April that that would be the song. And, you know, in early May, we were ready to release that song on June 1st.

And, you know, back in May, before Brianna Taylor, before George Floyd, before any of that, we had picked June 1 and we moved it to June 3. And then, you know, everything happened as soon as it did with tear gas and people in D.C. and all that. But no, COVID is not—the only thing that's affected is my ability to go out and make a living by touring. Otherwise, everything was exactly as it was planned before COVID.



Photo by Blake Little Photography

YOU BEGIN YOUR NEW ALBUM, *BLUE HEARTS*, WITH “HEART ON MY SLEEVE.” A TRACK THAT IS DECIDEDLY DIFFERENT FROM THE REST. IT’S A HEAVY, DELIBERATE INTRODUCTION TO THE ALBUM. — WHERE DID THAT COME FROM?

Um, I thought it would be, you know—the words just sort of fell out of the sky as they as they are want to do...most times. I think the idea of starting with a very sparse sort of acoustic guitar and voice, it was a way to try to get people’s attention, you know, to be able to be very plain spoken with my words. It’s almost, to me, like a soliloquy. You know, if you go to see a play and the protagonist steps out as a solitary figure on the stage for a couple minutes at the beginning and, you know, lays out a scenario that, you know, hopefully lets the listener or the viewer know what the story will be and what’s to come and setting the stage, that was the idea with carrying back the orchestration on that one.

After that first two minutes of, you know, sort of touching on, suggesting these will be some of the topics that we’re going to talk about with “Next generation,” the album kicks into full flight and goes all the way through “Password to My Soul.” And then, you know, the final song, “The Ocean” is sort of a reflection of the of the opening of the record and says, OK, yeah, it’s a great track that I like that.

And unfortunately, it’s never rung more true at this moment, as I talk with you from San Francisco...

STARTING WITH SECOND TRACK, “NEXT GENERATION,” WE’RE OFF TO A NEW BUT FAMILIAR BOB-MOULD-PACE, WHICH YOU’VE CALLED “THE CATCHIEST BATCH OF PROTEST SONGS I’VE EVER WRITTEN IN ONE SITTING.” WHAT ARE THE CRISES YOU’RE BRINGING TO THE FOREFRONT?

... first you know, right off the bat we’ve got climate change, which, you know, I don’t know—I don’t know how many more things have to happen. I don’t know how many more continents need to, you know, melt into the sea for us to understand what’s happening. You know, a lot of the record was contemplating the parallels between, you know, the first term of Reagan and the first term of Trump... television personalities with evangelical support, you know, either denying epidemics or downplaying pandemics, take your choice.

You know, I did not foresee, you know, spe-

cifically something like the George Floyd killing in Minneapolis, I don’t think any of us... You know, I guess we should have known, right. But you never want to think these things, you know, the history of racism in our country. Discrimination. You know, I think we’re all very—I think any of us who don’t walk the center line, you know, mainstream America have felt this.

And it’s pretty jarring and upsetting. And, you know, when it comes home and you know, you have to confront it, which we all know. I think as a country, more or less, it’s been curious for me, sort of tabling the notion of feeling marginalized, you know, as a as an older white gay man... when there are people of color who have incredible struggles every day—and now, you know, now I feel like we have to support that cause and create that awareness.

And, you know, I think there’s—I think there’s empathy there, but it’s a unique situation that we need to be mindful of. You know, I think there’s a theme on the record that... there’s whimsical notions of surveillance and technology running our lives for us. There’s also some pretty adult topics in there that, you know, might come as a shock to my mostly

straight audience. So, I think we covered a lot of ground in 35 minutes.

YOUR MUSIC IS NOW MULTI-GENERATIONAL, WHO DO YOU SEE PICKING UP THIS ALBUM?

Um, well, I think the—you know, I think my long-time audience will be very, very excited when they hear the entire album. I think it’s exactly what people have been hoping for, and it’s something that, you know, the three of us: me, John, and Jason have talked about for many years. You know, back in 2014, we had been talking about making just a straight up punk rock record, and we finally got about as close to it as we have, you know, with this new album... It’s a peculiar thing because I think the youth of America have a have a completely different way of listening to pop music. So, I’m you know, I’d like it if they give my work a try. I understand if it doesn’t appeal to them because maybe it comes from a from a different place and time. But hopefully, hopefully the younger audience will recognize that I try to stay on the correct side of history. Yeah. So. So, there’s that if nothing else.



Continued on page 14

DO YOU HAVE PLANS TO TOUR THE ALBUM? AFTER RESTRICTIONS EASE?

Yes. We had plans to be touring the album starting in late September. We had planned to be on the road for most of September and October. But of course, that is not possible right now. It's hard. That's how musicians actually make a, you know, a living wage is by performing... we certainly don't do it by streaming services. So that part is personally hard on all musicians and venues and every everyone involved... When the time is right and when we get the all clear, from hopefully the new government next year, we can start to make actual plans for the rest of our lives that are based on science and fact and reality, then, you know, we'll start booking.

IN OCTOBER, THE *DISTORTION* BOX SET WILL BE AVAILABLE. *DISTORTION* HAS YOUR MUSIC FROM THE LATE 80'S UP TO PRESENT TIME WITH NEW MUSIC AND LIVE RECORDINGS. IS THIS THE WAY TO GET BOB MOULD

A-Z (UP TO 2020)? IS THIS THE DEFINITIVE COLLECTION? WHAT DOES IT ENCOMPASS?

Distortion starts with 1989, *Workbook*, my first solo album after leaving to Hüsker Dü and it goes up through *Sunshine Rock*, which was my last solo album prior to *Blue Hearts*. It takes in all of the studio recordings, it brings in a lot of B-sides. It brings in a lot of rarities, brings in a number of live concerts that that have been presented in limited form in the past.

There's new liner notes from a journalist in the U.K. named Keith Cameron, who is very knowledgeable on my career, also got an artist named Simon Marchner who reimagined all of the album art and, you know, has told a wonderful sort of, you know, travelogue type story of my journeys through the new art itself. It's a pretty comprehensive look over 30 years of work, and I'm real grateful that I think it turned out real well, and [I'm] grateful to have the support of the record company that wanted to invest in a daunting process.

WHICH LIVE PERFORMANCES FROM *DISTORTION* STAND OUT TO YOU?

Well, I mean, it's you know, the first one, from spring of 1989, the Bob Mould Band that was out touring my first album, *Workbook*. It's just a really, really gifted group of players, you know, and Anton Fier on drums, Tony Maimone on bass, and Chris Stamey on guitar—and it's this show from Metro in Chicago, which is one of my favorite rooms in the world to perform at. You know, it's the first—it's the first look at how I would present my work post Hüsker Dü, and it's sort of an important document in that sense.

The Sugar recording from late '94 from First Avenue in Minneapolis, again, a room I grew up in. And it's you know, I think that was right at the end of—it was one of the final shows that Sugar performs... an incredible period of time and a lot of success and constant touring and recording... it's a good representation of different periods, different highlights, I guess. ■





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by Kassidy Tarala

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The New York-based jewelry company, Automic Gold, was founded on inclusiveness and always standing up for what it believes in. "Our mission is to make fine jewelry that is inclusive and accessible to everyone, no matter what size or gender."

Al Sandimirova started making jewelry for herself because, as a non-binary person, they couldn't find any fine jewelry that they liked. "Everything was too feminine or too masculine, and I was looking to something in between, but elegant and fine," they say. What began as a small project just for Sandimirova quickly became something more... much more. Today, Sandimirova's company is known as Automic Gold, a queer, sustainable, inclusive, and body positive fine jewelry store.

"We used to have a store in SoHo. At the beginning, it was tough because everything was up in the air and buying gold during a pandemic isn't anyone's first go-to," Sandimirova says. "But, with the huge support that we have from our followers and everyone who has a big love for the brand, we have been doing very well, considering."

Not only are all genders represented and welcome at Automic Gold, but the company is also inclusive in the sizes it offers and its representation of different bodies.

"We are inclusive. We offer sizes beyond the standard sizing. Our rings are from 2-16, and our necklaces, bracelets, and anklets are extended to larger sizes," Sandimirova says.

"We are still the only fine jewelry brand to offer such an array of sizes. We never retouch or photo-shop our models—body positivity! We use reclaimed gold and natural diamonds and gemstones. Also, we don't take shit from anyone and we speak out against and for topics we believe in."

One cause that Automic Gold believes in is the Black Lives Matter movement, which it has stood by both verbally and financially.

"We have donated large sums of money to various organizations and even held a giveaway where the entry required was to donate," they say. "We also continue posting to our Instagram to keep fighting for Black lives and encourage our followers to sign petitions."

Sandimirova says they love giving back to the community. "Whether that's donating to organizations, taking part of LGBTQ+ auctions, speaking out on our Instagram about certain issues at hand, or hiring queer models all year around and not only during Pride month," they say.

With the holidays coming up, Sandimirova recommends checking out Automic Gold's birthstones collection.

"It's the perfect gift for yourself or for someone special. Wear your birthday month or wear someone else's," they say (automicgold.com).



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Holiday Gift Guide

Sweet Treats

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2. CHOCOLATE MOUSSE WITH BERRIES

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3. V CHOCOLATES 1 LB PEPPERMINT BARK

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Holiday Gift Guide

by Ethan Boatner

Books

1. PHILOSOPHY SMACKDOWN

Douglas Edwards

Polity Press

\$16.95

Brit Douglas Edwards grew up enthralled by American pro wrestling. Now, as Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Utica College, he combines the two, viewing pro wrestling through the lens of philosophy, and vice-versa. Like WWE matches, Plato, he posits structured his dialogues with “baby face” (good guy) Socrates, and “heels” (whoever argued against Socrates), with their ensuing back-and-forth scripted just like WWE matches, with Socrates usually earning the belt. Edwards’s chapters encompass “Reality,” “Identity,” “Morality,” “Justice,” and “Meaning,” with, in a broad interpretation, fans as the baby face,” and scoffers and critics as the heels. A read through his “Glossary” will introduce neophytes to pro wrestling lingo. Edwards assures, “Socrates has a lot more in common with Stone Cold Steve Austin than you might think!”

2. THE RAIN MAY PASS

Alan Shayne

Rand-Smith Publishing

\$28

Shayne’s lyric prose allows the reader to share a conflicted 15-year-old’s life. Since infancy he has summered with his family on Cape Cod, but this year, 1941, he must help his difficult grandmother run her gift shop for two months. Lonely, isolated, Alan has an affair with the older Roger, who encourages the youngster’s theatrical aspirations. After Pearl Harbor, Alan discovers openings in radio and stage productions, and applies, overriding his parents’ resistance. Roger never responds to his letters, but Alan perseveres. He finds his identity, and not only makes it to Broadway, but becomes casting director for *Alice*, *Growing Pains*, *Night Court*, etc., and president of Warner Brothers Television, and wrote *Double Life: A Love Story* with partner, Norman Sunshine. A low-key, powerful read.

3. CHEMICALLY ENHANCED BUTCH: A MEMOIR

Ty Bo Yule

Wise Ink Creative Publishing

\$14.99

It takes tremendous energy to live at the author’s larger-than-life level, but Yule has the goods. He speaks of a “twenty-year quest for a bachelor’s degree,” yet follows with master’s in theological studies at Harvard Divinity School: Anything worth doing, is worth overdoing. Like many non-conforming offspring, the author has ongoing duels with Mom, from no dresses to use of testosterone, yet counts his parents as two of the coolest beings on earth. From the substance-, music-, women- and hormone-filled nineties in San Francisco, Yule returned to Minneapolis and created the Ur-dyke bar, Pi, a haven to thousands throughout its intense, meteoric existence. Yule’s muscular prose is a workout in itself. Strap into your La-Z-Boy and turn the pages: it’ll offer a bumpy, eye-opening ride.

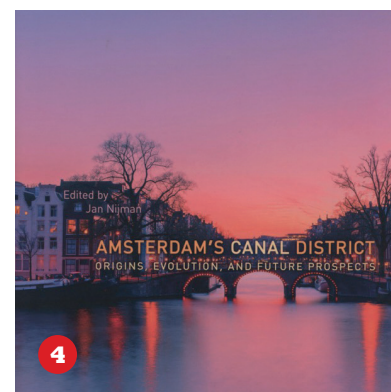
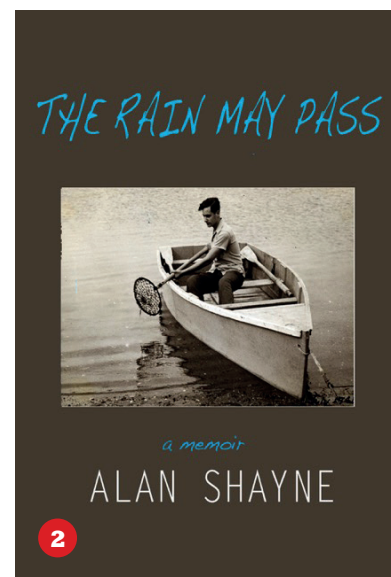
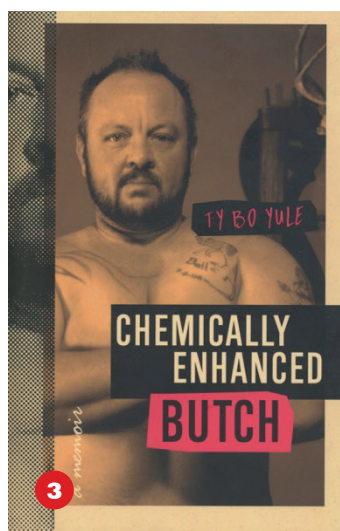
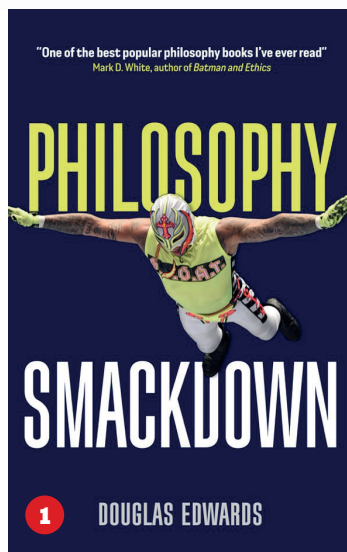
4. AMSTERDAM’S CANAL DISTRICT: ORIGINS, EVOLUTION, AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Ed. Jan Nijman

University of Toronto Press

\$50

Your planned visit is not likely possible this year, but for those who’ve lost their hearts to Amsterdam, here’s something to tide you over. The subtitle indicates the topics addressed in these eleven chapters where 17 contributors explore the city’s 400 years of progress, from the Golden Age of the 17th century to today. Russell Shorto (*Amsterdam: A History of the World’s Most Liberal City*) continues that theme, explaining how the city’s approach to commerce, building, art, science, and publishing all led to a unique emphasis on individuality rather than royalty. Amsterdam’s historic origins, the evolution of canal systems, and today’s (pre-Covid19) challenges, show stay-at-homes how individuals cooperated to raise a world presence out of marshland, designated a World Heritage Site in 2010 by UNESCO.



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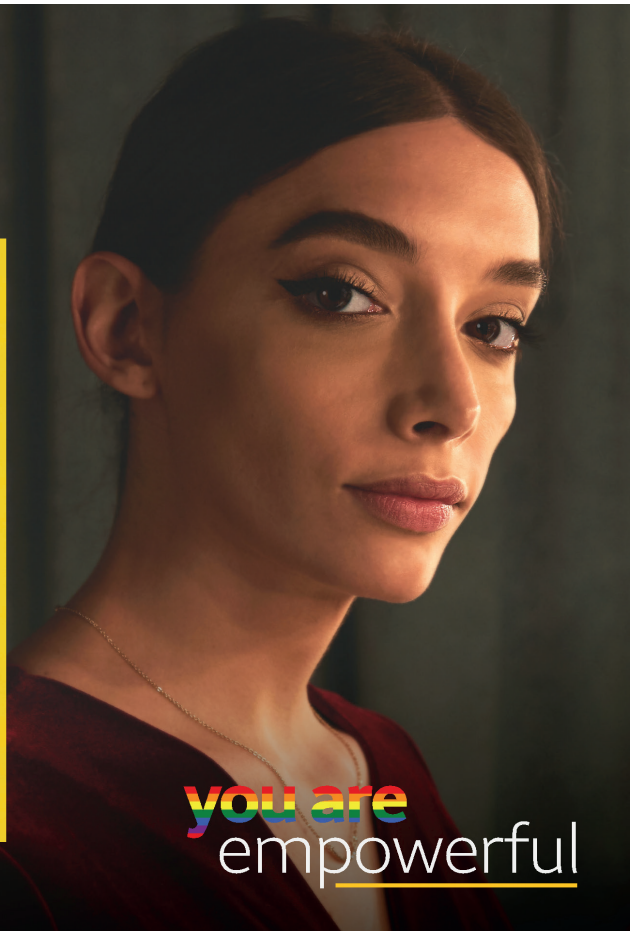
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Holiday Gift Guide

Fashion

1. THE WINTER PARKA

\$495

After a brief closure, Askov Finlayson returned in 2019 with a new focus on climate positive outerwear. The Minneapolis-based fashion house designed a Minnesota-proof winter parka—with hometown hats to match!

2. HERSCHEL HAT

\$31

Scout Handsome Apparel and Gifts in St. Paul has the perfect winter hats to add a burst of color to your winter wardrobe. With multiple design options, someone on your list would surely love to have this hat hoggin' their noggin'.

3. NORTHMADE CO. - COMFY CLASSICS

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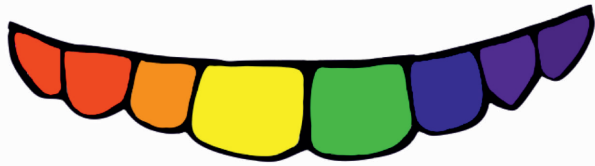
"Creating clothing, goods and initiatives for people, both near and far, with an up north state of mind." Formerly MPLS / STP Clothing Co, NORTHMADE is still rooted in Minneapolis—with more designs than ever. No matter which side of the river you're boasting, NORTHMADE CO. has got you covered.

4. ALASKAN HARDGEAR BIG DIPPER GLOVES

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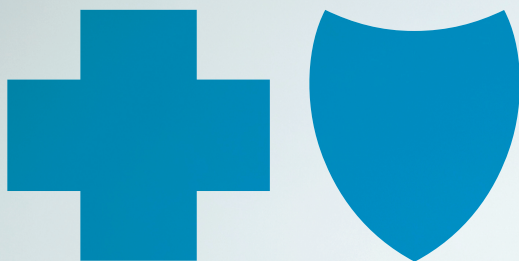
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Holiday Gift Guide

Fan Gear

Fit for fandom! Get in the game with these team-focused gift ideas.

1. MINNESOTA UNITED FC DREAMSEAT GAMING CHAIR

\$34.99

Play in style with this ergonomically inclined gaming chair. Show your love of the Loons as you take on your digital detractors (www.mlsstore.com).

2. MINNESOTA TWINS GROWLER TOTE SET

\$74.99

Get ready for another Minnesota Twins tailgate with this growler tote! This festive growler tote set features top quality Minnesota Twins graphics and a black stainless-steel growler—the perfect item to let everyone know your fandom is undeniable (www.mlbshop.com).

3. MINNESOTA GOLDEN GOPHERS 23" MISSION TIFFANY TABLE LAMP

\$199

Celebrate your Minnesota Golden Gophers fandom with this 23" Mission Tiffany table lamp! Even a fan cave needs light and this table lamp delivers while it displays your Minnesota Golden Gophers pride (gophersports.com).

4. NEWBORN & INFANT MINNESOTA WILD GREEN JERSEY BODYSUIT

\$16.99

The newest member of your crew needs some Minnesota Wild gear of their own. Welcome your little one into the squad by getting them their own jersey bodysuit. shop.nhl.com/minnesota-wild/

5. ADULT MINNESOTA LYNX FOCO CLOTH FACE COVERING 3-PACK

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Holiday Gift Guide

Holiday Entertainment

A year full of curve balls needs some familiar holiday cheer. This year, said cheer is delivered in-vehicle or to your desired screen, on-demand or by appointment.

1. BENTLEYVILLE: TOUR OF LIGHTS Nov. 21 – Dec. 27 700 Railroad St, Duluth, MN bentleyvilleusa.org

Throw on the coffee and make the drive to not-so-distant-Duluth, for a classic holiday memory-maker. For 2020, Bentleyville has implemented a COVID-friendly work-around (or *drivearound*) to bring another year of festive frolicking. The completely in-car experience promises to dazzle as always, while keeping you extra cozy (and safe) this season. This year's exhibit also serves as a Salvation Army donation drop for toys and food. Cost is \$10 per car, no commercial vehicles, limos, or buses. Masks are not required for guests in cars. Drive safe!



2. HOLIDAZZLE GOING VIRTUAL FOR 2020 holidazzle.com

Holidazzle will return for 2020, albeit virtual. The schedule and programming has yet to be announced, look for it by early December.



Continued on page 30



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Holiday Gift Guide

Holiday Entertainment

3. TWIN CITIES GAY MEN'S CHORUS VIRTUAL EVENT

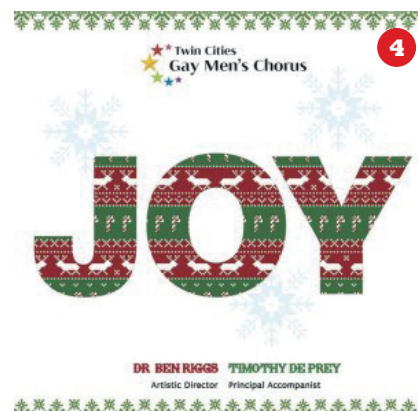
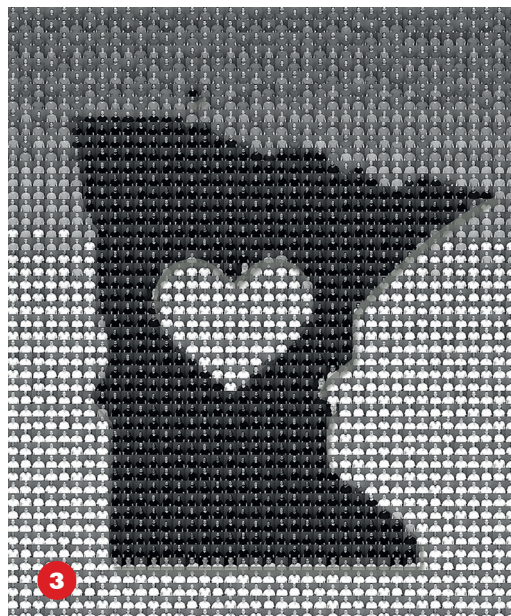
December 2020

Virtual performance

612-339-SONG (7664)

tcgmc.org

Now in their 40th season, Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus has shifted to virtual performances. *Holiday Hot Dish* plays like a holiday concert mixed with a baking show. Warm up with holiday choral constants as well as new music to spread cheer across their computer crowd. This year's performance also features a TCGMC-led, nationally commissioned work composed by Cincinnati-based composer Steve Milloy, honoring the life of George Floyd. In lieu of season tickets, the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus is offering a TCGMC Patron Subscription Program that grants access to their upcoming calendar of shows. Patron subscriptions start at \$125.



4. TWIN CITIES GAY MEN'S CHORUS RECORDINGS

tcgmc.org/music-merchandise

Tap into TCGMC's vast library of holiday albums to get the holiday harmony pumping! Beyond the holiday, the chorus offers recorded performances dating back to 2000. With two decades worth of performances available, you're sure to find the perfect gift for music maniacs! Albums start at \$10.

5. GUTHRIE CHRISTMAS SHOW: A VIRTUAL SPIN ON A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Dec. 19-21

1-877-44-STAGE

www.guthrietheater.org

Never one to disappoint, the Guthrie will be offering virtual theater this season, with their rendition of *A Christmas Carol*, adapted and directed for the stage by Joseph Haj. From Dickens' traveling podium, to your display, the Guthrie brings the show to the comfort of your home. Shows start at 7:30 p.m. Tickets start at \$10.



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- 632085 La Gondola Pinot Grigio
- 517717 Precision Napa Cabernet Sauvignon
- 607090 Vouvray Voltaire
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**2. FIRST AVENUE GRINDER
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When you saw this, someone came to mind. They'll love it! (first-avenue.com)

**3. FIRST AVENUE STAR
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 Twin Cities
Gay Men's Chorus

Holiday Gift Guide

by Brett Burger

Home Entertainment

DALEKO HOME INVASION AT DALEKO ARTS

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The question always is “When is theatre going to return to normal” and the truth is I don’t know. We truly don’t. Many theatre companies have shuttered, many are waiting in the dark and some are grabbing the pandemic by the horns and reinventing themselves for the time being. Daleko Arts is one of those companies. They have taken the concept of a subscription box and adapted it to work for them. That’s right, they have created a virtual theatre subscription box with a bountiful of events and goodies each month for a low, low price of \$5 a month! The box contains a multitude of theatrical events. Granted, this is an email, not a physical box, but they will include produced readings of plays, reality shows, a cabaret series, live readings of plays, events you can watch live, and more.

I truly mean it when I say Daleko Arts knows what they are doing. This is such a fun and exciting way for theatres to stay afloat and a safe way to do it with the pandemic. Plus, it’s the same price as a cup of coffee. (dalekoarts.com/dhi)



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Broadwayhd.com

I’ve written about it before but Broadway HD is an amazing website. For those unfamiliar with it, think Netflix but for theatre. Broadway HD is a streaming hub with hundreds of movie musicals, recorded Broadway plays and live performances by icons like Elaine Stritch. There is a wide variety for all theatre lovers so you’re bound to find something.

Some of my must see shows on this website include: *She Loves Me*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *The King and I*, *Funny Girl*, *Indecent*, *Stars in Concert with Sutton Foster* and *Falsettos*. Oh, and if you, like many of us were, turned off by the new *Cats* movie.... don’t fret because an actual Broadway performance of it is on Broadway HD!

Something that’s awesome about these streaming services is the affordability with them. Think of if you were to see a traveling Broadway show, some tickets are upwards of \$100 plus on top of that you have to pay multiple times if you’re taking the whole family. This is a cheap monthly payment, or you can save some money in the long run by purchasing a yearly membership. It really does add up and it’s a fantastic gift for anyone who is longing to sit in a theatre and watch some fantastic art play out in front of you. (Broadwayhd.com)



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Holiday Gift Guide

by Holly Peterson

Fun 'n Fitness

If you're looking for something fitness oriented, we have two fun suggestions this year – one for your favorite couch potato and one that is technically aimed at fitness aficionados, but is great for anyone on your list.

1. NINTENDO'S RING FIT ADVENTURE \$79.99

Ring Fit Adventure is a fun way to bring fitness into the home. If you know someone who is still nervous about going to the gym or just never liked going to the gym in the first place, they might enjoy playing Ring Fit Adventure – especially if they're already a fan of Nintendo. Ring Fit Adventure's RPG mode and mini games both feature cute, colorful graphics that make working out – dare I say it? – fun. There is also a targeted exercise mode available for those who are less concerned with game play and more concerned with keeping leg day as leg day. This game is exclusive to the Nintendo Switch, and although it can technically be played with the Nintendo Switch Lite, that requires a bit of a work-around. I'd recommend making sure that the recipient of this gift has a Switch already – or, if you really love them, throwing in a Nintendo Switch as a bonus gift.

Fair warning – this game sold out when COVID first hit, so if you're thinking about gifting this one, buy it sooner rather than later. (ringfitadventure.nintendo.com)



2. MASSAGE GUN (VYBE PRO, THERAGUN, ACHEDAWAY) Starting at \$197.99

Massage guns have been around for at least a decade, but they are surging in popularity in fitness circles right now. Every CrossFitter or marathoner you know is almost assured to have one of these babies on their list this year. Massage guns are used to relax muscles after workouts and have many benefits, including releasing lactic acid, increasing oxygen flow in muscles, relieving stiffness, and more. There are many different makes and models to choose from and, although I don't have experience with all of them, I can say that I personally own (and love) a Vybe Pro and my sister owns (and loves) a TheraGun. This gift will probably be most exciting for your fitness-head friends, but as someone who occasionally uses my massage gun to loosen up stiff back muscles after spending too much time hunched over my computer, I can verify that anyone with an achy body will appreciate a massage gun.

3. SKYBOX GYM – CLASSES/ MEMBERSHIPS

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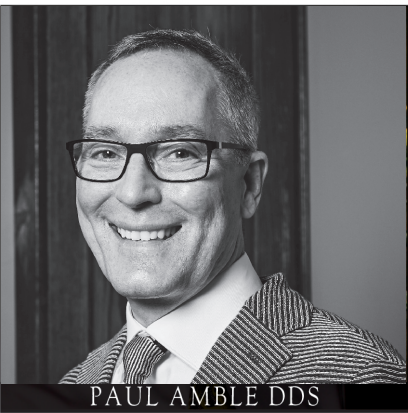
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Holiday Gift Guide

by Steve Lenius

Leather

This can be a tough one. Where do you start? Go beyond the gift card with this thoughtfully selected lot of leather-aligned offerings. List curated by Steve Lenius.

1. HANDMADE LEATHER-SCENTED CANDLE BANDEDmasculine

\$13.99

This handmade 6-oz. all-natural soy candle comes in a steel container with lid and has the leather aroma of “a broken-in baseball glove . . . or maybe a harness?” This is according to Chris Lavoie, the creator of BANDEDmasculine, who hand-pours each candle when it is ordered. This leather-scented candle is one of BANDEDmasculine’s bestsellers and has even been part of BANDEDmasculine’s pop-up shop at The Eagle LA in Los Angeles. BANDEDmasculine is in the business of creating “masculine-smelling stuff for guys.” Lavoie says he was inspired to create BANDEDmasculine when he “was looking around for some awesome stuff like candles, soap, and body wash that smell like guy things . . . leather, hunting lodges, barbershops, etc. . . . and couldn’t find anything. So, I made them myself!”

In addition to this leather-scented candle, BANDEDmasculine candles are also available in holiday scents like Christmas Tree, Spiked Egg Nog, Gingerbread Man, and Spiked Apple Cider. Other candle scents are inspired by drinks such as Kentucky Bourbon, Margarita, Mojito, Chardonnay and Black Coffee, and food flavors including Hot Buttered Popcorn, Orange Sriracha, Glazed Donut, Maple Glazed Bacon, Meat Rack (hickory barbecue), and even Cereal Milk (“lots and LOTS of Fruit Loops!!,” says Lavoie). Other masculine scents include Hunting Lodge, Humidor, Campfire and even Library. But, according to Lavoie, “No lavender . . . we hate that crap.”

Other BANDEDmasculine products include bar soap, liquid hand soap, body wash, and beard balm. (BANDEDmasculine.com).



BANDEDmasculine

— Candles - Soap - Body Wash —

BANDEDmasculine.com

2. SPANKING SET BY SEAGRAPE APOTHECARY \$36.99

Available from smittenkittenonline.com

This spanking set by Seagrape Apothecary is a convenient introduction to the sensuality of an erotic spanking scene. The kit contains spanking powder, a handmade leather slapper, edible cocoa honey dust (and a feather to apply it with), and a sample-size massage candle, all packaged in a handy clear plastic travel pouch.

The folks at Seagrape Apothecary suggest you start by sensually smoothing the spanking powder on your bottom’s bottom. Then create some impact clouds by using the included handmade leather slapper, another impact toy—or, of course, your hand. Follow your spanking session with some tender aftercare by applying the edible cocoa honey dust and lovingly kissing it away, or using the included soy massage candle to give a warm back rub.

Seagrape Apothecary, located in Portland, Ore., specializes in handmade goods for self-care of body, psyche and spirit. The mission of Seagrape Apothecary is “to help you transform self-care into a love affair.” The company’s values statement highlights pleasure, beauty, community, embodiment and connection. To support these values, Seagrape Apothecary provides education and community space, “in hopes of helping folks cultivate self-care skills and trust in their own magic.” Seagrape Apothecary supports small, independent makers, teachers and farmers—especially those who are members of the queer, immigrant, indigenous and PoC communities (smittenkittenonline.com).



Continued on page 42



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NAMI Minnesota

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Holiday Gift Guide

by Steve Lenius

Leather

3

3. INTENSELY COLORFUL BONDAGE ROPE BY AGREEABLE AGONY \$9.99 (15 feet), \$17.99 (30 feet)

You may remember that I wrote a few columns ago (in *Lavender* issue #661) about rope bondage being an excellent pandemic pastime. The bright colors of this 5/16" solid braid MFP (multifilament polypropylene) rope make it especially great for shibari and other decorative bondage. MFP rope is durable, easy to care for, and affordable. Because this rope is made of a synthetic fiber, it is waterproof, and it also resists most oils and lubricants. The bright colors go all the way through the rope and are completely colorfast.

Unlike rope from the hardware store, this rope has been carefully made specifically for bondage and kink activities—soft and smooth on the skin, yet still able to hold a knot. This rope is available in lengths of 15 or 30 feet in many single colors, a rainbow-colored twist, and three-color twists of Unicorn Cupcake (aqua, rose pink, and purple) and Flaming Cupcake: a blacklight-reactive mix of aqua, hot pink, and purple.

Agreeable Agony, the maker of this rope, is a small company based in Massachusetts that specializes in unique handcrafted kink toys. The company's motto is "Toys for pleasure, toys for pain." The crafters, artisans, and kinksters at Agreeable Agony are committed to providing high-quality products to the kink community at reasonable prices. They also are committed to education, and to building community, through munches and classes (agreeableagony.com).

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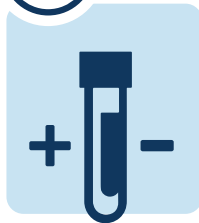
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